Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

considerable variety in the song of the male, and the same clear tones in the voice of the female. Most of the summer, a few notes may be heard, delivered in a less forcible manner.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.

Agelaius phoeniceus.

The notes of this blackbird are clear and melodious, but have little variety. The bird's habitat is in swampy places, where its song may be heard a great way off. After the nesting season, the song is seldom heard, but a shrill whistle is given for a longer time.

(To be continued.)

EDITORIAL.

THINGS NEW AND OLD.

On more than one previous occasion we have found that so called discoveries of our time had really been originally made several centuries ago. There has come to our notice now a work on "The Law of Sex-determination and Its Practical Application," by Laura A. Calhoun,* which may again illustrate the fact. Mrs. Calhoun has had much experience in California in breeding animals and proposes a theory of conditions that determined the sex of offspring. She proposed as the principal thesis the following:

"The sex of the embryo in man and the higher animals is determined in the ovary from which the ovum in question is developed. In the normal female, the ovary of the right side yields ova which on fertilization develop as males and the ovary of the left side yields ova which are potentially female."

Commenting on this, David Starr Jordan* states that "from this arises the practical deduction that sex can be determined at will through the service of gravitation. For the prospective mother to lie on the right side should ensure male offspring. To allow the spermatic fluid to flow to the left side means female offspring." Other theories of telegyny are proposed more or less scantily supported by facts. We have other theories with not a few facts to support them more or less plausibly, but we do not think this the place to discuss others. Regarding the main thesis of Mrs. Calhoun we do not, moreover, pretend to make either adverse or favorable comment, as we dare not even hope to feel competent in expressing as much as a valuable opinion.

---

* The Law of Sex-Determination and Its Practical Application", Laura A. Calhoun. The Eugenic Publishing Company, New York.

* Science, Vol. XXXIII., No. 846, p. 429., Friday, March 17, 1911.

On first reading of it, however, we were forcibly reminded of the opinions and theories and beliefs of the older scientists of the middle ages, nowadays called "dark ages," more or less appropriately and truly, if not more likely, because we are at present so hopelessly 'in the dark' concerning the great men, and their great scientific attainments. It is fair to say that whenever and wherever careful scientific observation without the aid of machines, microscopes and the like, were not indispensable, the great students of former ages even decades of centuries ago were as capable of careful investigation as we of to-day. True, their interpretation was often wrong, but they have often shown themselves our superior also, because looking only for truth and a solution of problems, they approached a subject with an unprejudiced attitude of mind. There are, for instance, not many astronomers of to-day that could have made Galileo's discoveries with his instruments and under similar restrictions. Theophrastus of Eresus several centuries before the Christian Era knew things about plants that we have been till very lately attributing to the discoverers of the seventeenth and eighteenth and nineteenth century. Many are still wont to consider that little of scientific value was done before the eighteenth century in biology, and that, the exponents of earlier ages were theorists and dreamers only.

This condition of opinion may be due partly because few of our times can or do read the Greek or Latin treatises of the older scholars. I have heard it said that there are many scientists now flourishing doctor's degrees that owing to lack of classical training not only would not compare with scholars of old, but would scarcely qualify for bachelor's degrees in any European University of the 'dark ages,' whatever be the reason why the older masters of science are unknown there can at best be very poor excuses for the fact.

In looking over a review of Mrs. Calhoun's book, I remembered an old work of the thirteenth century printed in 1662 at Amsterdam, containing a theory not much unlike the present one. I refer to a small treatise by Albertus Magnus, the eminent professor of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is entitled *De Secretis Mulierum item de Virtutibus Herbarum, Lapidum et Animalium,* etc. Bound in the same volume is a similar treatise, *De Secretis Naturae*; by Michael Scotus. In the latter are found nearly the same discussions, though with important modifications as the quotations show. In spite of our want of appreciation of theories of the thirteenth century, a theory of the twentieth is not a jot more useful, true, or important unless based more solidly on facts. The following quotations from the aforesaid works of Albertus and Scotus may in any case prove of interest.

"Et nota secundum Avicennam, si semen cadit in latere sinestro matricis, generatur foemella, si in dextro, generatur masculus."* "Et ideo in dextro generantur masculi, etc, etc."†

It will be noted too that this theory of sex-determination is attributed by Albertus to the Arabian philosopher, Avicenna. Whenever quotation is made due credit is always given by the ancient scientists, but gives examples of observed facts when he makes a modification in this old theory. Compare the following from Michael Scotus.

"In latere dextro dicimus quod masculus concipitur and in sinistro foemina, ut quidam volunt: nos vero dicimus quod latus non facit ex toto, sed semen testiculi, quia de dextro, exit masculus, and de sinistro foemina, etc. etc."

Then follows a practical observation and proof for what he says.

Scotus beside this devotes two chapters to the subject of sex-determination. (Chaps. XVI., XVII.), Albertus also has a special chapter VIII. on the subject. Scotus intimates that there have been exceptions to the theory.§

That there are some ideas on sex-determination which can hardly be viewed by us as anything but absurd maybe admitted, but in view of the striking similarity of the views expressed in these quotations with those of Mrs. Calhoun and professor Jordan, we are justified in believing that were the scientists of to-day better acqpainted with the works of the distant past less time would be lost in rediscovering things old.

---

* Abertus Magnus. L. C. p. 96. Compare also p. 103.

† l. c. p. 97.

§ Scotus, M. De Secretis Naturae. pp. 266, 267.